

# Hike taxes for mental health — providers

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

On paper, Gov. James Blanchard's budget seems to contain a 7 percent increase for mental health. Even allowing for inflation, there is a 2 1/2 percent dollar improvement.

But not according to Oakland County service providers, the contractors which teach and care for the retarded, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. They say their programs face cuts.

"Some things are worse than raising taxes, and one of them is making other human beings suffer," said Albert Ascher, executive director of Jewish Vocational Services, which provides work in Southfield to 270 people with developmental disabilities.

SOME 200 people in the Oakland

Mental Health Coalition applauded Ascher's defiance of the anti-tax mood in the State Capitol.

On a Monday night hearing before local legislators in the Bloomfield Township Library, they called for restoration of local programs cuts.

Many advocated 270 million worth of expanded services in Michigan's budget for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

And there was a lot of direct criticism of the governor, himself an Oakland resident.

BLANCHARD proposed \$868 million for fiscal 1990 from the state's general fund budget, up more than 7 percent from the current \$810 million.

But Agnes Wiser, executive director of the Association of Retarded Citizens, said the budget contains \$117 million in "unavoidable cost in-

creases." For example, there are a new federally required expense for screening Medicaid patients in nursing homes for mental illness, and the expense of retraining laid-off state mental health workers.

Actually, the coalition says, Blanchard's budget falls \$58 million short of funding current programs.

State Rep. David Gubow, D-Huntington Woods, who serves on a subcommittee handling mental health appropriations, said, "Democrats are inclined to make it a continuation budget" — that is, to repair the \$56 million shortfall.

Gubow said the mental health budget has been increased 55 percent since Blanchard took office, but many of the increases are actually restorations to pre-recession levels.

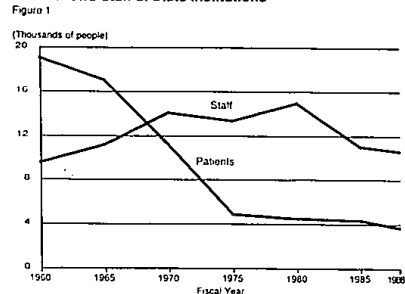
Wiser said the state Mental Health Coalition is preparing to rally on the Capitol steps to win budget improvements.

SPEAKERS called for \$270 million in expanded programs to eliminate waiting lists.

But William Anderson, an aide to state Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, said that money will be hard to come by. "The Department of Mental Health already has the third largest general fund budget in the state (behind social services and higher education)," he said. And the increase for mental health which the coalition seeks is the equivalent of the entire combined budgets of the departments of Natural Resources and State Police.

Gubow said legislators have been "barraged" with requests for increased funding for Alzheimer's patients, K-12 schools and higher education.

Michigan's Mental Health System:  
Patients and Staff at State Institutions  
Figure 1



Michigan has moved thousands of clients from state mental hospitals to community settings over the last three decades. But hospital staffing has continued to increase.

"Keep up the pressure," said state Rep. Judith Miller, R-Birmingham.

DR. JAMES GRAVES, director of the county's community mental health program, said, "We have never made an application to meet all the needs. We apply for what we think will be funded."

"This year we are \$800,000 short of a continuation budget. We have an intolerably long waiting list."

"We aren't living in recessionary

times. The State Treasury is not scraping bottom."

The program cuts in the proposed budget, Graves said, will eliminate jail services, 40 slots in the New Horizons sheltered workshop, two clinical workers in the geriatric center, and in-home family treatment — "a major disaster in this county."

JOYCE KELLER of the Jewish Association for Retarded Citizens said there will be fewer places in the

nursing, occupational therapy and physical therapy programs.

"The lack of new money is disturbing to us," she said, adding JARC has 250 people on its waiting list.

Dorothy McQueen, past president of the Alliance for the Mentally Ill, said expanded services would allow more housing and supervision — "100 patients could be released from the Clinton Valley Center (state hospital in Pontiac) if there were homes for them."

McQueen added, "50 percent of the mentally ill are also substance abusers. We need a program for the dually diagnosed."

JEWISH VOCATIONAL Services would have to cut 24 developmentally disabled slots from its Southfield-based center now serving 230, said Ascher.

"We're hampered because the increase in funds doesn't match the increase in costs. We have managed by small salary increases and philanthropy," he said.

Ascher called for diverting funds from other state programs or a tax increase. His tax increase remarks were applauded.

Dan Kivel of the Autism Society of America said, "If the Oakland County developmentally disabled budget were doubled tomorrow, there would still be a waiting list. . . . Continuation funding is a continuation of crisis."

"We must end the outrage of waiting lists. Early intervention is much cheaper (than hospitalization)."

## Blanchard: State continues shift

Here are excerpts from Gov. Blanchard's budget message on mental health:

During the 1980s, 30,000 patients were cared for each year in state institutions with patients staying an average of several years.

A concerted effort to change mental health policy has succeeded in serving many patients in community treatment alternatives. . . . Today there are only 5,000 patients in state facilities with an average stay of only 200 days.

I am proposing we expedite the movement to a high-quality community-based mental health system in the 1990s through a number of initiatives: . . .

- Funding for 40 Assertive Community Treatment programs to keep severely mentally ill patients out of institutions and closer to their families and support systems. We will also explore alternatives to hospitalization within the private sector.

- Improving staff training . . . \$25,000 in state resources and a federal grant of \$125,000 will be provided in FY 1990. . . .

- Phase out the operation of two state facilities. The patients will be transferred to community mental health programs. . . . Staff who are laid off will be provided with job retraining and placement assistance

## Production quality conference topic

A conference on Advanced Manufacturing Techniques for Quality and Productivity will be held at Oakland Community College's Auburn Hills Campus from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 11.

Participants will be able to select from 16 workshops. Topics include: "Total Quality Management," "Development Cycle Reduction," "Zero Phase Development Planning," "Assembly Line Variation Analysis," "Evils of Standard Cost Systems" and "Advanced Tooling and Tooling Management Systems."

Keynote speakers will be Dr. R. Stephen Nicholson, OCC chancellor; Dr. Gerald Cole, principle staff engineer, Ford Motor Co. research; and William Eureka, vice president and general manager of the American Supplier Institute. A tour of the Auburn Hills Campus' advanced technology instructional facilities is also included in the program.

For registration materials and information on the advanced manufacturing techniques conference, contact Joel Storch, 675-8350, or Oakland Community College, 853-4241.

The advanced manufacturing techniques conference, sponsored by Chapter 69 of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, is open to all SME members, students and the public.

The at-door registration fee of \$40 includes lunch and all conference materials. Discounts are available to student SME members and others who register beforehand. A portion of the conference proceeds will be donated to the John Hopps Scholarship Fund and the Manufacturing Engineering Education Foundation.

## How to appeal your assessment

The Michigan Consumers Council has published its 1989 edition of "How to Review and Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment."

The one-page pamphlet provides information on Michigan's property tax appeal procedures, including summer tax collections.

The brochure clarifies how an individual property tax bill is computed using the state equalized valuation (SEV) rate. There is also information on how assessments are made and how property owners can determine if the assessor's appraisal of their property is correct.

"How to Review and Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment" is one of the most-widely requested brochures published by the Consumers Council.

Free copies are available by writing the Michigan Consumers Council, 105 W. Allegan, 414 Hollister Building, Lansing 48933.

THE GROUP advises property owners who may feel that their appraisals are unfairly high to review the appraisal records in their assessor's office for accuracy.

Common assessment errors in-

clude such false assumptions as a house having a finished basement or fireplace when it doesn't.

Property owners should also review their assessments for missed defects that might tend to reduce the value of a house, such as the shifting of the foundation, and even simple clerical errors in computing the tax.

If you find an error, discuss it with the assessor first. Some assessors may be willing to adjust the appraisal on the spot, thus saving the property owner and the assessor the nuisance of a formal protest.

But if you find it necessary to formally protest, the brochure provides tips on how to proceed and document a case before a local board of review.

THE PAMPHLET emphasizes that timing is crucial in making an appeal.

Each township and city has its own functioning board of review that meets periodically. It is crucial that property owners who plan to file a protest contact their local city or township office to obtain the deadline for filing.

## Court trains volunteers

Oakland County Probate Court will train volunteers to work with troubled children, aged 10-16, in two sessions this month.

Sessions are on Monday, March 13. One runs 9:30-11:30 a.m., and the other from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in the court's conference room, second floor, east wing of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Information about the program is available during weekday business hours from Kevin Threatt, volunteer coordinator, at 858-0045.

## Please pass the bread.

Your generous donation to the Torch Drive can help feed the hungry.

## 30% Off Forecaster Spring Wool Coats



With fair weather in the forecast, now's the time to lighten up your cover up. Save 30% on our entire collection of Forecaster spring wool coats for misses and petites. Choose from a variety of styles including single-breasted and double-breasted plus the newest designs featuring funnel necks and flanged shoulders. Misses sizes 8 to 18. Petite sizes 6 to 16. Reg. \$120 to \$160, sale \$84 to \$102. Sale ends March 19. Coats, Northland, Eastland, Westland, Oakland, Fairlane, Twelve Oaks, Lakeside.

400 total units at all Hudson's stores listed

hudson's

USE YOUR HUDSON'S SHOPPING CARD VISA® MasterCard® The American Express® Card or Discover® Card